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## REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES.

**Mysterium und Mimus im Rig-Veda, von LEOPOLD VON SCHROEDER, Professor an der K. K. Universität zu Wien, Wirklichem Mitglied der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Leipzig, 1908.**

The Rig-Veda consists in the main of a succession of hymns of praise, addressed to a large variety of polytheistic gods. These gods are worshipped with libations and songs, in exchange for which they are expected to bestow their favors in the very tangible form of wealth, sons, and general prosperity. Marked ritual practices, traditional names of bards, and a body of priests, classified according to their functions at the sacrifice, are evidences of advanced formalism. This does not leave much play to literary production of any other kind than the monotonously psalmodic. But the collection is large: there is in it—mostly between the lines—something of the real life of the time; some historic brief mention; some legendary allusions that might, given the occasion and the master, become epic or dramatic themes; and a good deal of the more popular beliefs, superstitions, practices, festivals, and other homely interests.

Aside from a number of hymns, mostly in the tenth book, that deal with popular practices, the most conspicuous exception to what I have called the psalmodic hymns of the Rig-Veda is furnished by a dozen or more dialog hymns, occasionally even monolog hymns. The persons speaking and the subject-matter of these dialogs, broadly considered, are religious. The speakers are, as a rule, gods, deified objects, or semi-divine heroes and priests. On the other hand, the subject-matter of these dialogs is legendary and narrative, rather than hymnal or psalmodic. That is to say, the stuff is such as lends itself equally well to epic or dramatic treatment. As a matter of fact the beautiful Undine-like theme of king Purūravas and the nymph Urvaṣi emerges in Sanskrit literature in both forms, epic narrative and drama. The material is invitingly plastic; later India, fond both of story and of drama, cannot tell us much of the original purpose of these dialogs.

If my memory serves me, as late as the eighties of the last century these dialogs were considered to require no particular explanation. The Rig-Veda, tho in the main religious, was thought to contain purely literary, *belles-lettres* compositions, as well as hymns to the gods, or ritualistic stanzas of one sort or

another. No one is surprised at the epistolary novel with its trick of expunging the author of the story, and letting the hero and heroine tell their tale to one another. The story gains—or loses, according to the taste of the reader—by an additional element of what may be called surchargedness. It is more effusive, more flamboyant, more emotional, and, of course, also more dramatic. There is even the monolog novel in which the tale is confided to a patient diary, or to some straw friend of the male or female sex. The author thinks to secure still greater emotional effect. In this way it seems to me that the Rig-Veda dialogs passed in those earlier days for narratives whose outer form required no particular explanation. At the same time, with inherent contrariness, they suggested something dramatic too; I doubt whether the classical Sanskrit drama was ever treated in any intelligent book or article dealing with Sanskrit Literature without some allusion to these early Vedic dialogs.

This was the situation when Professor Oldenberg stepped in with his *ākhyāna* theory. *ākhyāna* means 'story', 'epic story'. In two articles, in the xxxvii. and xxxix. volume of the Journal of the German Oriental Society, Professor Oldenberg reconstructed even for the early Vedic period the following narrative or epic type: There is a story in what we might call a floating state. This story has certain climaxes which were at an early time fixed in poetic stanzas. The narrator of the story might tell the body of it in a manner suited to his own taste and memory. But if he were a good Oriental story-teller he would at the proper point of the narrative bring in the verses; they are the particular delicacy, the *pièce-de-résistance* of the entire entertainment. And the theory goes on to assume that such verses might be fixed and recorded in set literary form without the prose frame, so as to be more or less abrupt or even unintelligible, unless the prose narration could be supplied from some collateral source of information.

Professor Oldenberg, gifted literary historian, sanest of scholars, did not construct this theory lightly. This type does exist: in the story of Çunaḥçepa, of which we have both the prose and the verses; in the apocryphal 'Tale of the Eagle' (*Suparṇākhyāna*), and in all sorts of later apologs. The *Suparṇākhyāna* and Jātaka 253 do in fact preserve verses of stories which taken by themselves make no connected sense and require prose framing in order to be understood. The Jātaka is explained by a speech of Buddha in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The question is not so much whether the *ākhyāna* type of literature existed at some early Indian period, but whether it applies to the dialog hymns of the Rig-Veda; whether they also are poetic stanzas put into the mouths of personages that figured in a prose-frame narrative. Professor Sylvain Lévi<sup>1</sup> and,

<sup>1</sup> Le Théâtre Indien, pp. 301 ff., 307 ff., 333.

very lately, Dr. Johannes Hertel<sup>1</sup> entered vigorous protest against this theory, and insisted upon the purely dramatic character of the dialogs. And now Professor Leopold von Schroeder's brilliant and profound book, 'Mysterium und Mimus im Rig-Veda', not only reasserts their dramatic character, but essays to show that they were religious, dramatic mysteries, performed by actors on various ritual and festival occasions, part and parcel of the religious beliefs and practices of the real people of the earliest Hindu time. This agrees best with their very varied and peculiar contents: the underlying religious substance of many of these dialogs is overlaid with facetious, erotic, orgiastic, or phallic elements. As with other Indo-European peoples, and for that matter peoples the world over, these elements sought and found expression in dramatic representations with distribution of rôles among different speakers. These representations were accompanied by dances, and, presumably, also by some kind of dress-up. We should expect that the great Vedic ritual, handed down to us with strenuous detail in Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka-Sūtra, would report all this, but the superior character of this ritual precludes such reports. The Āraṇyaka ritual is hieratic, represents the religious activity of a high class of priests in behalf of the gentry. Here, in general, is not the place for the uncanny and unsavory. The popular drama, with its orgiastic elements, is treated with silent contempt in a ritual that, in spite of its own obvious shortcomings, is after all based upon adoration of the luminous pantheon of the Rig-Veda. Its priest-craft, even though it has become in its own way foolish and mechanical, is at the root the same as that of the Rig-Veda bards, the Vasisthas, and Viśvāmitras, the Bharadvajas and the Atris. Such, in brief, is Professor von Schroeder's theory.

In the main, and understood aright, this theory is sound, in my opinion. The dialogs are dramatic; they do not for the most part require any prose connective tissue, and such tissue does not in reality exist. An occasional narrative allusion in a Brāhmaṇa text to the subject-matter of the dialogs we must expect in these texts whose whole soul is in illustrating and motivating ritual practice by events that happened in the legendary past. And the Brāhmaṇas often go their own silly way, full of misunderstandings and later-born clap-trap; in this they are followed by the still sillier ancillary texts of the Bṛhaddevatā and R̥gvidhāna variety.<sup>2</sup> I think there should be no doubt in any mind, after von Schroeder's demonstration, that such texts do *not* contain the prose frames of the dialog stanzas. Nor are they based upon earlier and better narratives which have been lost.

<sup>1</sup> Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, xviii, p. 59ff., 137ff.

<sup>2</sup> See, as an illustration of this, the treatment of the dialog of Saramā and the Paṇis in the Cāṭyāyana Brāhmaṇa (reported fragmentarily by Śāyana); in the Jāiminiya Brāhmaṇa, and the Bṛhaddevatā, 8, 24. See Oertel, JAOS. xix, 97ff.

Professor von Schroeder is also right in associating with some of these dialogs mimetic, orgiastic, phallic, or facetious practices. The chapter in which he elaborates the dialog hymn of Agastya and Lopamudrā (pp. 156 ff.) is a skilful and delightful study of an ancient practice, held alive tenaciously in modern times. He has at least convinced me that we have before us a charm for fructification or generation. This he compares successfully with similar Germanic and Roman practices, and, more narrowly, with the well-known obscenities of the solstitial *mahāvṛata*-festival. He might have added the practice at the 'horse-sacrifice' in which the chief queen (*mahiṣī*) puts into her lap the *membrum* of that 'confounded horse' (*aṣvaka*) which, even after the horse has been sacrificed, remains a convincing symbol of generative power (VS. 23, 18, *et. al.*). The existing ritual within which such practices are fossilized either no longer understands these practices, or it explains them away. This I have shown to be the case with the *Kuntāpa*-hymns, that curious medley of 'gift-praises', riddles, and obscenities which fits like a round peg in a square hole into the honest *Ṣrāuta*-rites of the Āitareya and Kāuṣṭhiki Brāhmaṇas.<sup>1</sup>

I am not quite so convinced, as is Professor von Schroeder, that *all* the dialogs were accompanied by mimetic representations and dances, though it is the singular merit of the book to have established the dance as an early Vedic and Indo-European companion of dramatic composition. What the author has to say about the dances of the gods (pp. 36 ff.), most notably about the 'dancer' (*nṛtī*), god Indra, I regard as one of the most valuable contributions to the study of mythology and Vedic science which the book has to offer. In the light especially of the Kṛṣṇa myth of later times, nothing would seem more natural than that a god like Indra should be made to act his own dances, the outward sign of his warlike inspiration. But, just at this point, some evidence might be expected from the ritual texts, even after allowing much for their usual reticence in such matters. I do not forget that the author assigns these dramas to a very early time. Yet the custom of dancing is tenaciously long-lived, and dances of themselves are so harmless, that we might expect to see them spared by the priestly code. I imagine that the mysteries of these dramatic dialogs were, to some extent and on some occasions, mental, and in the nature of *jeux d'esprit*. Every religious performance had its festal and climax moments. Evidence of the existence of dramatic dialog without mimic accompaniment is not wanting in the literature. So, e. g., the dialogs between teacher and pupil at the confirmation rites (*upanayana*). Purely intellectual *saṁvādas* (dialogs) are the cosmic and theosophic charades at the horse-sacrifice (VS. 23,

<sup>1</sup> See Bloomfield, The Atharva-Veda (Encyclopedia of Indo-Aryan Research), pp. 98, 100.

9 ff., *et. al.*). I have had occasion in the past to remark on the curious juxtaposition of 'gift-praises' (*dānastutis*) and phallic passages, in RV. 1, 126, and 8, 1, 30 ff.<sup>1</sup> Each type of composition, from its own point of view, marks festive humor. RV. 1, 126 is a monolog in which the very reputable ancient bard, Kaṣṣivant, first brags incontinently about his great fees, and then obscenely exalts his sexual prowess.<sup>2</sup> The villanous *Kuntāpas* are preceded in the AV. by the phallic *Vṛṣākapi* hymn,<sup>3</sup> and followed by the *Dadhikrā* hymn, which also contains phallic elements, exactly as in the Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras.<sup>4</sup> The distribution of the *dakṣiṇā* (*baksheesh*) seems to have been one of the chief occasions for *erotica*. On such an occasion the dramatic recital of such a tit-bit as the *Vṛṣākapi* hymn requires no other justification than its own contents. There is no urgent need of assuming costumes, or other mimetic accompaniments. The refrain, *viṣvasmād indra uttarah* is a toast to Indra, just as is *indrāyendo pari srava* in the festive and popular hymn RV. 9, 112,<sup>5</sup> about which the ritual is regrettably silent. It will be observed that there is no very profound difference between von Schroeder's and my own view. The latter, perhaps, clears the ground for the pure *sāṃvāda*, a real Hindu type of literature, beside the *ākhyāna* and the *nāṭaka*. Solemn colloquy, riddle-question and answer, and humorous, off-color dialog, distributed dramatically between two or more persons, point in a measure to social, rather than strictly popular, performance. I have previously used the word 'saukneipe' to illustrate the obscenities which appear in such surprising intimacy with the 'gift-praises'. I seem to see the feasts, abundant consumption of soma, and the inevitable pleasantries that follow. What more fitting setting for the dramatic recital of the *Vṛṣākapi*, and the like, own brothers of the *Kuntāpas*?

*Habent sua fata libelli.* Professor von Schroeder's book is essentially comparative and deals largely in reconstructions of prehistoric myths, rites, and popular practices. Such reconstructions cannot from the nature of the case present themselves with the certainty of mathematical demonstrations. There are bound to be some accidents and uncertainties. In common with the author I have never doubted the existence of prehistoric Indo-European mythology.<sup>6</sup> But all that are faithful to this idea must expect yet a while the buffets of that *intransigent* scepticism which at the present time holds in these matters. The book will arouse much discussion, possibly not all of it evenly sympathetic,

<sup>1</sup> The Atharva-Veda, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> All that is completely misunderstood by the later ritualist; see ÇÇ. 16, 11, 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> Von Schroeder, pp. 304 ff.

<sup>4</sup> In AB. 6, 27 this kind of composition is called *çilpa*, 'work of art', imitative of the art works of the gods, and likened unto the cloth of gold with which elephants are caparisoned.

<sup>5</sup> Von Schroeder, pp. 408 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See my Religion of the Veda, pp. 100 ff.

but I believe that the number of its friends will grow, and that it will mark an epoch both in Sanskrit Philology and in Comparative Mythology. All students of religions will look forward with tense expectation to Professor von Schroeder's nearly completed 'Altarische Mythologie', which, I am sure, will go far to restore the present rather unstable equilibrium of these studies.

MAURICE BLOOMFIELD.

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W. THOMSON: *The Basis of English Rhythm*, Glasgow, 1904.  
*The Rôle of Number in the Rhythm of Ancient and Modern Languages*, Glasgow, 1907. T. S. OMOND: *Metrical Rhythm*, Tunbridge Wells, 1905.

Mr. Thomson distinguishes *accent* from *pitch*, but admits "the common tendency of strong accent and high pitch to occur together upon the same syllable" (*Basis*, p. 8). A more important point is his view of the relation of *accent* and *quantity*. He rightly calls attention to the fact that, in English, quantity does not depend on the length of the vowels alone, but that the length of syllables may be "due to length of vowels, or of consonants, or of the two combined", here agreeing with Prof. Wulff of Lund. He also points out that "monosyllables, which are, in connected speech, accented, are often distinctly long", instancing the quantitative equality of *bit* and *bar* in *a bar more* and *a bit more*, and of *tall* and *bad* in *a tall man* and *a bad man*, and declares that "syllabic burden" is no test of quantity, *shouldst* being shorter than *shut* in *If thou shouldst mark* and *To shut windows*, here joining issue with Mr. Omond. In spite of this Mr. Thomson does not accept the point of view which is identified with the name of Prof. Wulff, namely that *quantity depends* entirely on accent, or rather on *logical or ethical relief*. What then is his attitude? We must not of course take seriously his dictum that he "has treated for the most part of phenomena which could be investigated and recorded by a Chinaman who does not know a word of our language, but does understand something of the nature of musical rhythm" (p. 36). He has given us one definite indication of his views (p. 10): "Within certain limits . . . the insertion or omission of unaccented syllables does not affect the total duration of a phrase, and the length of accented syllables varies according to the character and number of unaccented syllables intervening before the next accent . . . . Quantity, as applied to the isolated words of a dictionary, is one thing, and as applied to words forming a piece of organised speech, quite another". On the one hand he refers (p. 33) to "the natural device of accenting every long syllable", the reverse of which